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Report of the High Commissioner

Summary

This note reviews major protection and solutions developments during the period June 2013-May 2014. It highlights protection responses in emergency and ongoing crisis situations, as well as the challenges presented by mixed migration and movements by sea. The note also reports on broader aspects of refugee and IDP protection, comprehensive solutions and statelessness. The information contained in this note is presented through an age, gender and diversity lens. Information on UNHCR's age, gender and diversity policy is contained in EC/65/SC/CRP.14; resettlement, children protection, and solutions are reported upon separately in EC/65/SC/CRP.11, EC/65/SC/CRP.13, and EC/65/SC/CRP.15 (available from http://www.unhcr.org/standingcommittee).

The note also provides an update on the implementation of pledges made by States at the intergovernmental event at the ministerial level of Member States of the United Nations on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which was held in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2011.

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I. Introduction

1. Over the past year, instability and conflict persisted in many parts of the world, leading to several new emergencies while others continued unresolved. Against the backdrop of large-scale population displacement, and despite the generosity of host and donor States, humanitarian response and community reception capacities were stretched. In the mixed migration context, border closures, restricted access, arbitrary detention and other barriers and deterrents to admission and asylum were of serious concern. The growing number of abductions of asylum-seekers and refugees from countries of asylum was a troubling trend. Meanwhile, maritime incidents continued to take many lives, underscoring the need for new approaches to this particular challenge. Notable progress on statelessness was made, with greater resolve by States and other stakeholders to prevent and address the phenomenon. The response to situations of internal displacement was also strengthened, including through the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December 2013, which focused on this theme. Although renewed emphasis was given to solutions, the number of newly displaced persons outweighed, by far, those for whom a solution was possible. The failure to resolve long-standing conflicts meant that return and reintegration was an unrealistic option for many, while opportunities for local solutions expanded modestly owing to the goodwill of a number of host countries.

II. Protection in emergencies and ongoing crises

2. UNHCR was robustly engaged in numerous large-scale, complex emergencies involving both refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Adding to the pressures of existing crises, three new situations – the Central African Republic, the Philippines and South Sudan – were designated by the United Nations as level-3 emergencies. Providing protection in such situations involves three key elements. First and foremost, it requires that persons of concern are able to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms, without discrimination. This principle guides all of UNHCR's interventions and operations on the ground. Second, concrete, quality protection services need to be delivered promptly, such as registration, documentation, measures to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and child protection, and this requires that UNHCR and its partners intervene when persons of concern are at risk. Third, it means that protection considerations are integrated into every service and assistance programme.

3. The war in the Syrian Arab Republic has now entered its fourth year. The exodus from the country grew by more than 1.7 million refugees in 2013, bringing the total number to over 2.7 million by mid-2014. Inside the country, there were an estimated 6.5 million IDPs, of which an estimated 3.5 million were residing in locations that were difficult or impossible to reach. During the first five months of 2014 alone, UNHCR and its partners delivered assistance to more than 1.5 million people in 13 out of 14 governorates, reaching more than 100,000 individuals a week. UNHCR participated in a number of inter-agency convoys to hard-to-reach areas and launched humanitarian airlifts of food and aid supplies from Erbil, Iraq. As the situation deteriorated in Homs, UNHCR participated in the evacuation of civilians from the Old City and prepared a set of minimum standards, grounded in principles of international human rights and humanitarian law, to guide future evacuations. These standards were subsequently endorsed by the United Nations Country Team in Damascus.

4. The host countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey generously provided protection and assistance to the Syrian refugees. In addition to the ongoing registration of newly arrived refugees, biometric iris-scanning is being rolled out in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, which will strengthen the accuracy and completeness of the information recorded and enable UNHCR and its partners to better address the needs of the population. Approximately four out of five Syrian refugees reside outside of camps. To reach the most vulnerable among these populations in Jordan and Lebanon, UNHCR, together with the World Food Programme, is implementing cash assistance programmes. In Jordan, at least 92,000 home visits were carried out to assess socio-economic and other needs.

5. More than half of the Syrian refugee population are under 18 years of age. UNHCR and its partners continued to help the Syrian children overcome their situation, including by strengthening child protection and prioritizing education. Almost 400,000 Syrian refugee children have enrolled in formal education across the region. Despite the investments made, that represents less than 40 per cent of the children. SGBV prevention and response programmes were also strengthened through multisectoral approaches, community outreach and mechanisms for identification and referral.

6. The scale and depth of the Syria refugee crisis has placed extraordinary pressure on the host countries and support for them remains crucial. Economic and social assessments of the impact of the crisis on Jordan and Lebanon were undertaken by the World Bank and the United Nations, and the findings fed into the inter-agency Regional Response Plan for 2014. As national development plans in the region could not have anticipated the extent of pressure that would be placed on the local economies and infrastructure, the increased support to host communities in the Regional Response Plan was designed to complement the plans. Also, in order to relieve pressure on the host countries, 30,000 resettlement places have been allocated this year for the most vulnerable Syrian refugees. The aim is to resettle an additional 100,000 refugees by the end of 2016.

7. The situation in the Central African Republic was characterized by widespread conflict and violence, extrajudicial executions, SGBV, torture and other atrocities, prompting its designation as a level-3 emergency. The fighting displaced over half a million people internally, including 142,000 in the capital. Approximately 360,000 people fled to neighbouring countries, namely Cameroon, Chad, the Congo (Republic of), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNHCR mounted emergency operations in these countries to strengthen the State responses to the influx. Meanwhile, it bolstered its presence in the Central African Republic to address, within the inter-agency framework, the many protection and humanitarian assistance needs.

8. The outbreak of new fighting in South Sudan in December 2013 displaced 111,000 people internally and close to half a million across borders into Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. UNHCR welcomed the decision of most governments in the region to recognize on a prima facie basis the refugees fleeing South Sudan. Ongoing violence in parts of Sudan, particularly in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, left 1.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, with hundreds of thousands internally displaced and 250,000 refugees in Ethiopia and South Sudan. Across the region, the remoteness of refugee sites and the lack of basic infrastructure, including camps in flood-prone areas, were major impediments to the delivery of protection and assistance for refugees. Competition over water, food and other resources increased tensions among refugees as well as between refugees and host communities.

9. Despite a number of encouraging political developments in Somalia, a large portion of the population remains displaced with many people located in areas that are inaccessible due to a lack of security. Currently, there are some 1.1 million IDPs and nearly one million refugees in the region, including close to 30,000 who fled across borders in 2013. While some spontaneous returns have taken place to Somalia, the overall security situation has

delayed prospects for organized voluntary return. Instability prevailed in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with continued waves of displacement. In three northern states of Nigeria, the security situation remained precarious, leading to the prolongation of the Government's declared state of emergency and the displacement of thousands of people internally and across borders into Cameroon and Niger.

10. Yemen continued to face a complex situation characterized by ongoing civil unrest, a fragile security, political, economic and social situation, and extreme poverty. In addition to a large number of IDPs, Yemen is affected by a mixed flow of asylum-seekers and migrants, and currently hosts 239,000 refugees from the Horn of Africa. The situation in the country contributed to reduced access to food, basic services and livelihood opportunities for the refugee population.

11. Four million people were displaced in the Philippines following a devastating typhoon that struck the country in November 2013. UNHCR's pre-existing presence on the ground meant that it could quickly organize an emergency airlift to provide aid to the survivors and, as co-lead of the protection cluster, set up protection monitoring and response structures. Working closely with the authorities, particular attention was given to assisting vulnerable populations and those in remote areas. Housing, land and property issues remain key challenges to allowing the displaced to return home.

12. While a number of displacement situations became further protracted, others showed signs of stabilization. In Myanmar, positive political developments took place, opening up possible opportunities for return. Consultations were held with all stakeholders on voluntary repatriation for refugees in Thailand, while UNHCR continued to participate in the inter-agency response to assist 140,000 persons who remain displaced in Rakhine State. In Iraq, returns took place alongside further displacement, while stability in some areas was matched by rising insecurity in others. The deteriorating security situation in Anbar Governorate in early 2014, for example, displaced some 360,000 persons, bringing the total number of displaced to approximately 1.2 million

13. As a result of rising organized criminal violence and insecurity in Central America and Mexico, the number of asylum applications from these areas has sharply increased, particularly in the United States of America, and there has been a spike in the number of unaccompanied and separated children. UNHCR is conducting studies and profiling exercises in Central America, including through a new strategic partnership with the Central American Integration System, to better understand the magnitude and patterns of forced displacement and to raise awareness of these new displacement trends. In Honduras, the Government passed a decree establishing an inter-institutional Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence, of which UNHCR is a member.

14. The situation in Colombia stabilized to some extent with renewed efforts to resolve five decades of conflict. Nevertheless, human rights violations perpetrated by demobilized armed groups and new actors continued to force people from their homes. There have been significant movements along the border with Ecuador, where up to 1,000 new arrivals were registered each month in 2013. This trend has continued in 2014.

15. To support operational responses, UNHCR released a preparedness package for refugee emergencies, which provides guidance to staff and partners on standards, risk analysis and contingency planning. Field staff were also equipped with guidance on maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum, as well as information on risk mitigation and accountability, particularly in light of the Secretary-General's human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces and the Rights Up Front initiative (http://www.un.org/sg/rightsupfront). The Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) endorsed a statement on the Centrality of

Protection in Humanitarian Action' in December 2013, which was disseminated to all Humanitarian/Resident Coordinators.

16. Following two expert meetings in 2012 and 2013, UNHCR issued *Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements*, which provide options to address complex or mixed population movements, particularly in situations where existing responses are not suited or adequate. While temporary protection or stay arrangements must not replace existing frameworks, such as the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the Guidelines were developed in recognition that there are circumstances where alternative responses that are predictable and flexible may be beneficial, pending transition to other arrangements. Such arrangements are particularly suited to countries and regions with few States parties to the 1951 Convention. UNHCR also contributed to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's (CEDAW) General Recommendation N° 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

III. Refugee protection

A. Protection in mixed flows

17. Migration is at the very juncture between UNHCR's international refugee protection and solutions work on the one hand, and the policies and practices of governments in managing their borders, on the other. While there are many legitimate measures taken by governments to prevent and respond to the phenomenon of irregular migration, their non-discriminatory application can mean that asylum-seekers and refugees are denied access to asylum and other fundamental rights. Together with partners, UNHCR has been working with governments to strike the right balance in their migration management policies and practices, and build fair and efficient asylum systems.

18. Securing access to territory and protection, especially in the context of mixed migratory movements, remained a global challenge. The principle of *non-refoulement*, the cornerstone of international protection and a norm of customary international law, was not always respected. In particular, physical and administrative barriers to accessing safe territory, such as border closures, the erroneous application of "safe third country" concepts, and the granting of extradition requests without due process safeguards were common. Secrecy surrounding the transfer or relocation of asylum-seekers to other countries, as well as an increase in the abduction and unlawful removal of refugees and asylum-seekers from asylum countries, were particularly worrying. UNHCR registered its concern about such cases and issued guidance for States on safeguards against unlawful removal.

19. The routine detention of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons, alongside economic migrants and often in sub-standard conditions, posed another major threat to their security and rights. This prompted UNHCR to develop a five-year global strategy to end arbitrary detention practices, which will focus on some 10 countries in the initial two-year roll out. The strategy emphasizes ending the detention of children. UNHCR successfully intervened in a number of court cases on detention during the last year, and in the framework of the memorandum of understanding signed by UNHCR and the International Detention Coalition in June 2013, supported a series of regional workshops on detention

[1] Available from http://www.interaction.org/document/centrality-protection-humanitarian-action-statement-iasc.

and alternatives to detention. UNHCR's *Guidelines on the Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers and Alternatives to Detention* are now available in 10 languages.

20. At the operational level, given the complex movements in the Gulf of Aden, UNHCR strengthened its work in Yemen through, inter alia, identification and referral mechanisms, detention monitoring, and support to the Danish Refugee Council's teams patrolling the Gulf. In Asia, where mixed movements are common, UNHCR continued to provide support to the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process). UNHCR also provided logistical and financial assistance to those wishing to voluntarily return home in the context of the regional programme on assisted voluntary return implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In Central Asia, regional cooperation and good practices were discussed at the second Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration held in Kazakhstan in June 2013.

21. In Europe, UNHCR is concerned about the lack of effective access to protection at some parts of the European Union's external border due to serious barriers and reports of "pushbacks" without appropriate protection screening. In the western Balkans, an initiative was launched to help strengthen asylum systems in the region.

22. Combatting people trafficking, a crime which entails serious violations of human rights, was high on UNHCR's protection agenda during the year. Many persons of concern to UNHCR are at risk of such abuse and fall victim to traffickers, adding to the dangers they face in search of safety. In response to increasing incidents of smuggling and trafficking in the East and Horn of Africa, UNHCR developed a comprehensive regional strategy and action plan to address it at the country level. As part of the regional strategy, Egypt put in place a system whereby trafficked persons who claim asylum are now referred to UNHCR for fast track registration and provided with initial assistance. In Sudan, UNHCR worked to reduce the incidents of disappearances, smuggling and trafficking among refugees and asylum-seekers by providing training to the security forces, enhancing collaboration with partners and establishing a safe house in eastern Sudan, where the problem is prevalent. In Tunisia, a protection-sensitive border initiative was launched in 2013 to strengthen the capacity of border officials in migration management, including the identification of trafficked persons and their referral for appropriate redress. New anti-trafficking laws were introduced in Bolivia (the Plurinational State of) and Costa Rica. As part of the Bali Process, UNHCR began developing a training curriculum on the identification, assistance and protection of trafficked persons in the Asia-Pacific region. A pilot training was organized in the Republic of Korea in March 2014.

23. At the global level, UNHCR contributed to the second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development of the United Nations General Assembly, which took place in October 2013, and provided support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration. UNHCR also issued a *Guidance Note on Bilateral and/or Multilateral Transfer Arrangements of Asylum-seekers*, setting out the standards expected for such arrangements.

B. Protection at sea

24. An increasing number of asylum-seekers have lost their lives on dangerous sea journeys, at the hands of criminal smugglers. While the rescue-at-sea tradition remained strong among shipmasters, at times those rescued were refused disembarkation, pending difficult negotiations. In many regions, there is a lack of consensus among States on disembarkation and processing arrangements.

25. Following the tragedy off the coast of the Italian island of Lampedusa in early October 2013, in which more than 360 persons lost their lives, Italy launched the "Mare Nostrum" operation. This initiative aims to reinforce patrols and rescue capacity in the Mediterranean Sea. Since the start of the operation, 43,000 persons have been rescued. Many other incidents go undetected around the globe because of the vast sea routes as well as the absence of search-and-rescue regimes in some areas. Worrisome practices of "pushbacks", "towbacks" and other forms of maritime interdiction have taken place in the Asia-Pacific region, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean, testing the principle of *non-refoulement*.

26. The Praesidium project, which was launched in Italy to provide a protection-sensitive framework for inter-agency cooperation to meet the post-disembarkation, reception and processing needs of those rescued, offers a useful model that could be adopted in other locations. A further best-practice example is the recently adopted regulation on Frontex[2]-coordinated surveillance of external sea borders, which reinforces the principle of *non-refoulement*, fundamental rights at sea and regional burden-sharing. UNHCR also continued to promote the *Model Framework for Cooperation Following Rescue-at-Sea Operations*, adopted at the 2011 Djibouti expert meeting on refugees and asylum-seekers in distress at sea.

27. Momentum to advance protection at sea is building, with several regional conferences in 2013 and 2014. The Jakarta Declaration emerging from the Indonesia-hosted special conference on irregular movements of persons in August 2013, as well as the Sana'a Declaration adopted at a regional conference in Yemen in November 2013, both addressed protection at sea. A regional conference in the Bahamas also explored opportunities for regional approaches to identifying people with protection needs who move by sea. Protection at sea is a responsibility of coastal as well as non-coastal States. In Europe, UNHCR has proposed to States and European Union institutions a common response to sea arrivals through the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative. UNHCR has also launched a global initiative on protection at sea. To be implemented together with partners, the initiative will not only address the immediate responses to such incidents but also the drivers of irregular movements by sea. The High Commissioner's 2014 Dialogue on Protection Challenges, which will focus on this theme, will underpin this initiative.

C. Fair and efficient State asylum systems

28. Assisting governments to build and improve asylum and protection systems is central to UNHCR's mandate and the protection of refugees. There have been a number of positive legislative developments at regional and national levels, including follow-up to the pledges made at the ministerial intergovernmental event in 2011.[3] At the same time, laws in some countries had the effect of restricting access to asylum. UNHCR assisted governments in developing national laws in at least 50 countries during the reporting period. In line with their pledges, Bolivia (the Plurinational State of) and Papua New Guinea adopted new immigration and asylum laws. In Europe, the Dublin III Regulation came into effect on 1 January 2014, and the remaining recasts of the Common European Asylum System were adopted in June 2013, with legislative amendment processes underway in many countries.

[2] The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union.

[3] Information on the ministerial intergovernmental event is available from http://www.unhcr.org/ministerial.

29. Several significant reforms of national asylum systems and procedures also took place. UNHCR provided advice and training in support of the new unified screening mechanism in Hong Kong SAR, China. Technical advice was also provided to Japan and Morocco in relation to their asylum review processes. In Morocco, the Government renewed its migration and asylum policy, leading to the formal recognition of UNHCR-documented refugees and the provision of residence permits. UNHCR worked with the Government of Ireland on the introduction of a single procedure to manage claims for refugee status and subsidiary protection, as well as to resolve the backlog in the latter cases. In the Republic of Korea, refugee status determination (RSD) capacity was strengthened and the establishment of a reception facility in Incheon for newly arriving asylum-seekers was completed. In Djibouti and the United Republic of Tanzania national eligibility committees resumed their work in 2013.

30. In Europe, quality initiatives were undertaken in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus, as well as in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and in the Americas, they were implemented in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama. UNHCR also engaged with State authorities, legal and judicial actors, universities and civil society on training and capacity-building. At the request of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, UNHCR carried out an audit on the best interests of children in families seeking asylum in the country. In Uruguay, UNHCR organized a regional expert consultation on the refugee definition in the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees to bring greater clarity to its interpretation. Reports on the state of asylum systems in Bulgaria, Italy and Ukraine were released. Together with the University of Tripoli, a refugee law course was prepared for the Libyan authorities. UNHCR also continued to collaborate with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, in San Remo, Italy in offering multiple international refugee law courses.

31 Weaknesses in some systems were also exposed during the reporting period. In 2013, Bulgaria was faced with a significant increase in asylum applications, especially from Syrians, and UNHCR launched an emergency response to assist the Government in improving reception conditions and processing applications more efficiently. These efforts were undertaken in close cooperation with the European Asylum Support Office, the European Commission and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In the Pacific, UNHCR remains concerned about transfer arrangements for external reception and processing and the absence of adequate protection standards and safeguards for asylum-seekers and refugees.

32. At the policy level, UNHCR issued new *Guidelines on International Protection: Claims to Refugee Status related to Military Service*, a research report on credibility assessment in the European Union, and a number of papers on eligibility and protection considerations. Several return advisories were also published. UNHCR intervened in a number of important court cases in the area of refugee protection. An external version of the *UNHCR Protection Manual* and a Russian version of *Refworld* were released.

D. Mandate refugee status determination

33. Despite progress made by many States in developing and strengthening national asylum systems, UNHCR remained responsible for carrying out registration and RSD in a significant number of countries. Over the past years, in response to an increasing number of new emergencies, UNHCR has had to expand many of its existing mandate RSD operations and establish new ones as part of its protection response. As a result of the Syria conflict, UNHCR quickly adapted its mandate RSD operations in the region in order to process large numbers of arrivals, and implemented simplified procedures for resettlement

and humanitarian admission. UNHCR also carried out, on an ad hoc basis, RSD for maritime arrivals and asylum-seekers in detention.

34. UNHCR continued efforts to enhance the efficiency of mandate RSD procedures, by identifying and implementing alternative case processing approaches or alternatives to RSD for select nationalities or groups. It also further strengthened its RSD staffing capacity. In 2013, the number of staff engaged in mandate RSD increased by 11 per cent, from 400 to 440, representing the highest total number and the largest annual increase. Despite this increase in capacity, the number of individual RSD applications registered exceeds the number of individual RSD decisions issued. As a result, the number of pending cases rose to 252,900, mainly due to increases in the operations in Malaysia and Turkey. UNHCR deployed a number of experts to assist States with RSD, and published the preliminary findings from a lessons-learned study on UNHCR's experience with such efforts. Recognizing that the scale of UNHCR's mandate RSD activities is not sustainable, the Office renews its call on States to assume greater responsibility for this endeavour.

E. Security, dignity and enjoyment of rights

35. Life in exile is often characterized by family separation, loss of livelihoods and income, and dependency on aid. Applying UNHCR's age, gender and diversity (AGD) policy, the participation and empowerment of all those affected, including host communities, ensure appropriate protection responses and can contribute to a more stable and secure stay.

36. UNHCR took several steps to maximize the impact of its strategies in the three key areas of child protection, education, and SGBV protection and response, including setting up a monitoring system to track results arising from their implementation. With the support of the Government of the United States of America, UNHCR developed the "safe from the start" initiative to bolster its protection response in these three areas from the outset of an emergency. This initiative promotes specific actions, including the deployment of dedicated staff, innovative programming in field operations and the building of staff capacity through learning initiatives. In eight operations, UNHCR developed planning and monitoring tools to strengthen implementation of the strategies. UNHCR worked with the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity on a pilot study in Rwanda and developed a child protection index to detect trends and impact by comparing survey results over time. Youth engagement has also been supported in many operations, including in Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Sudan.

37. UNHCR intensified its efforts to provide legal assistance and counselling on SGBV in Burundi, Djibouti and Uganda. In Kenya, the mobile court system led to the prosecution of 66 sexual offenders. A similar mobile court project has been launched on a pilot basis in Uganda. In Ecuador, UNHCR is assisting with the development of response capacities to help survivors of SGBV. In Costa Rica, a screening tool to enhance UNHCR's effectiveness in identifying persons at risk and SGBV survivors was developed. Initiatives such as the establishment of safe shelters for women and capacity building projects for community workers were supported in many operations around the world. UNHCR also released an advocacy film to inform asylum decisions in cases of female genital mutilation. In Europe, having achieved the necessary 10 ratifications, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) will enter into force on 1 August 2014.

38. UNHCR continued to advance implementation of its AGD policy. A series of webinars on different AGD-related protection issues were held. In response to an increase in reports of serious discrimination and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals in Haiti, UNHCR and its partners organized a roundtable

to discuss protection responses for sexual minorities. In Central America, UNHCR is supporting a pilot project aimed at developing a network of shelters in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. Racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance continued to threaten asylum-seekers and refugees. To sensitize primary and secondary students and teachers in Greece, a project was implemented to promote tolerance and prevent racism. In South Africa, IOM, in partnership with UNHCR, launched a campaign to raise awareness about the positive contributions of migrants and refugees to society.

39. In 2014, UNHCR issued new global strategies on 1) settlement and shelter, 2) livelihoods, 3) safe access to fuel and energy, and 4) public health, which all have protection principles at their core. The livelihoods strategy, which emphasizes the right to work, aims to move refugees out of extreme poverty and provide opportunities for them to make a safe and sustainable living.

40. Registration and population data management are critical to understanding the protection and assistance needs of persons of concern. Robust systems are important for identity management, including the protection of identity, the reduction of fraud and the prevention of identity theft. In Pakistan, protection space for registered Afghan refugees was secured by the extension until December 2015 of the proof of registration cards issued by the Government. UNHCR continued to invest in biometric systems in a number of operations. In 2013, biometric registration was rolled out in Burkina Faso and Mauritania to support the Mali refugee operation.

IV. Protection of internally displaced persons

41. In many places around the world, internal displacement has become chronic. At the end of 2013, the global number of persons displaced internally reached an estimated 33.3 million, the highest number ever recorded. Escalating conflict and violence, and massive human rights abuses, ranging from forced recruitment to torture and rape, forced millions into displacement in 2013 alone. The absence of governance and the rule of law provided fertile ground for war crimes carried out with impunity. Despite considerable progress over the last decade in developing tools, policies and legislation to enhance protection for IDPs, numerous gaps persist. To address these gaps, the High Commissioner's 2013 Dialogue on Protection Challenges focused on IDPs. It identified a number of practical ways to enhance protection and assistance for this population. UNHCR also renewed its commitment to engaging in situations of internal displacement and to improving its own performance, in support of national efforts and in cooperation with a wide array of stakeholders. UNHCR has since issued internal guidance to staff that outlines the principles and framework for the Office's engagement in situations of internal displacement. In addition, a new e-learning programme was launched to build staff awareness.

42. A number of important normative developments took place over the past year, including the adoption of national policies on IDPs in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Yemen. Georgia initiated steps to revise its law in relation to status recognition for second and third generation IDP children. A national commission was established in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to draft IDP legislation, and UNHCR was invited to participate in it. As of February 2014, 22 States were parties to the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), with five accessions during the reporting period. In September 2013, government officials from 15 African countries received training on the implementation of the Kampala Convention, in Uganda. At the 129th assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the IPU and UNHCR released a *Handbook on International Displacement: Responsibility and Action* to help countries formulate domestic frameworks and legislation to protect IDPs.

43. In the context of the inter-agency response to IDP situations, the global protection cluster provided support to 31 country-level protection clusters and other field coordination mechanisms, 20 of which were led by UNHCR. The global protection cluster continued to serve as a platform for analysing trends, developing tools and guidance, providing field support, building staff capacity and undertaking advocacy. To facilitate access to information across operations, the global protection cluster relied on its operations cell, help desk, periodic newsletters and its website. The global protection cluster worked closely with country-level protection clusters to provide input for strategic plans and inter-agency appeals. Equally important was the global protection cluster's support in undertaking comprehensive needs assessments and setting up protection monitoring that could feed into the design of an overarching protection strategy for the United Nations country teams.

44. UNHCR undertook regular support missions to strengthen the capacity of country-level protection clusters, contributed to field guidance materials, and organized a series of training activities on cluster coordination, protection mainstreaming and protection in natural disasters. In Côte d'Ivoire, support was provided to train military and security forces on the rule of law in the aftermath of an emergency, and to conduct a series of contingency planning workshops with a protection focus.

45. Together with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, UNHCR is implementing a project with funding provided by the European Commission to build the evidence base on displacement arising from natural disasters and climate change, and to equip States with tools and guidance for responding to such situations. UNHCR is also supporting the Nansen Initiative on disaster-induced cross-border displacement, and held a consultation with partners in San Remo, Italy on planned relocations and humanitarian evacuations. UNHCR participates in a UN-wide Advisory Group on Climate Change and Human Mobility, the purpose of which is to develop partnerships among various organizations in order to effectively inform policy and law-making.

V. Solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons

46. Solutions remained elusive for many persons of concern to UNHCR due to ongoing instability in some countries and a lack of sustainable reintegration opportunities in others. Nevertheless, significant steps were taken to advance solutions for refugees and IDPs, including in the context of partnerships. In 2013, more than half a million persons secured a durable solution.

47. To bolster UNHCR's focus on solutions, UNHCR established a Solutions Steering Group at Headquarters. The Group aims to ensure that solutions activities address political, legal, economic and development issues holistically and strategically, and that projects are evidence-based and results-oriented. However, advancing solutions requires a strong commitment from the international community. The Copenhagen Roundtable held in April 2014 helped solidify this commitment with the launching of a Solutions Alliance, a network of actors from governments, humanitarian and development organizations, civil society and the private sector who are committed to finding innovative solutions to displacement. UNHCR is one of the five co-leads of the Alliance, alongside the Danish and Colombian Governments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Rescue Committee. Thematic areas to be addressed, which can foster solutions, include housing, land and property, personal documentation, and social cohesion.

48. UNHCR is working with partners to articulate comprehensive solutions strategies with multi-year frameworks, as well as clear step-by-step actions to achieve these objectives. Exploring how solutions can feed into the initial emergency planning and response, such as the facilitation of resettlement for Syrian refugees during the current crisis, is also progressing.

49. In Africa, UNHCR and partners are pursuing the implementation of a multi-year plan of action to address the situation of some 430,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who are living in sub-Saharan Africa; some 50,000 are expected to be resettled by 2017, and options are being explored for the others. In 2013, more than 62,000 Congolese refugees returned to Equateur province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, bringing the total number of returns to more than 110,000 since the beginning of the repatriation operation in May 2012.

50. Further progress has been achieved in the implementation of the comprehensive solutions strategy for former Angolan refugees. In 2013, over 1,700 Angolan refugees repatriated with UNHCR's assistance, mostly from Botswana and Zambia. The local integration of Angolans in countries of asylum advanced as well, with the issuance of residence permits and personal documentation. UNHCR held consultations with the Angolan authorities and host countries to plan the repatriation of the remaining 25,000 Angolans wishing to return home. Information campaigns and counseling are ongoing in the refugee communities. In Zambia, the strategic framework for the local integration of former refugees has been finalized. It foresees alternative legal status and integration opportunities for former refugees in and around the hosting areas. At the same time, the Angolan authorities have started the screening process for the issuance of national passports in the two settlements in Zambia as well as in Namibia. Most countries hosting significant numbers of Angolan refugees have invoked the cessation clause.

51. The Rwandan comprehensive solutions strategy remained in focus over the past year. Some 7,300 former Rwandan refugees from 12 countries took up the option of voluntary repatriation, while the principal solution remained local integration. Naturalization commitments were made by a number of countries, and it is hoped that more will join in this effort. To determine the intentions of the population, surveys were underway in all of the host countries. The key obstacle to local integration, however, is the inability of many refugees to pay for Rwandan passports and local residency permits. UNHCR continues to advocate for a waiver of the fees. Exemption procedures in respect of cessation declarations are in place in most countries.

52. UNHCR signed a tripartite agreement with Somalia and Kenya, establishing a framework that underlines the shared principle of voluntary return. While relative stability in some parts of Somalia has triggered the spontaneous return of some IDPs and refugees, the conditions are not yet in place for organized voluntary returns. The Tanzanian Government completed the screening process for the naturalization of some 1,300 Somali Bantu refugees living in Chogo settlement. The certificates are being processed by the authorities.

53. In West Africa, UNHCR is working to bring to a close a number of protracted refugee situations, including Ghanaians in Togo; Chadians in Niger; and Togolese in Benin and Ghana. In Benin, the Government has extended the offer of 10-year residence permits to all refugees on its territory. In Mali, humanitarian and development partners are collaborating with the Government and local communities on a return strategy for IDPs and refugees. While the situation in northern Mali is not yet conducive to large-scale returns, assistance is being provided to refugees in Niger and Mauritania who wish to return to certain locations. In Côte d'Ivoire, a pilot country for the Secretary-General's Policy Committee Decision on Durable Solutions, UNHCR and UNDP are working with the Government, the United Nations Country Team, NGOs and civil society, on the

development of a solutions strategy for IDPs and returnees. Joint projects on social cohesion are underway, and a profiling exercise starting in June 2014 will complement the recently completed national census and inform programme priorities.

54. In the Americas, a comprehensive solutions initiative was developed in Ecuador, in coordination with the Government, to improve livelihood opportunities for refugees, while pursuing resettlement possibilities and advancing the prospect of labour mobility and migratory solutions within the region. Voluntary repatriation continues to be pursued in Colombia in line with the evolving situation. In Costa Rica, most Colombian refugees are now advancing towards naturalization and are less dependent on aid. The Agreement Relating to Residence Permits for Nationals of States parties to Mercosur facilitates protection for Colombian refugees who are settled in other South American countries and their migration to Argentina or Brazil. In Colombia, the transitional solutions initiative, a joint project between UNHCR and UNDP, continues to yield progress through initiatives undertaken in 17 IDP communities.

55. In Europe, UNHCR completed an EU-funded project to improve refugee integration in European Union Member States, which was carried out in four Central European countries. The project examined factors that both hinder and assist refugee integration, as well as the policies necessary for integration to be successful. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a three-year EU-funded project led by UNHCR is aimed at implementing the Revised Strategy for the implementation of Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement and supporting solutions for IDPs through a joint needs-based prioritization of communities and families with specific needs. As part of the durable solutions strategy, UNHCR has recommended that host States apply by the end of 2014 the "ceased circumstances" cessation clause for the refugee population displaced from Croatia during the 1991-1995 conflict. However, this could be progressively implemented between 2014 and 2017 to allow fulfilment of the commitments made by governments in the 2005 Sarajevo Declaration and the 2011 Joint Declaration."

56. In Asia, UNHCR continues to work with concerned governments and partners to implement the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries. A portfolio of project proposals to address the needs of Afghan refugees and host communities has been developed to advance solutions on a regional basis. In the host countries, refugee skills development is being emphasized in order to support solutions for Afghans, including by equipping refugees with skills and work experience needed in their potential areas of return. In an effort to regularize the 1.4 million undocumented Afghans in the country, the Iranian Government held bilateral negotiations with the Afghan authorities and, subsequently, offered renewable residence visas to all Afghans holding legal travel documents in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which would allow them to obtain work permits. Accordingly, around 135,000 families have been issued with passports by the Afghan Consulate in the country.

57. In Kyrgyzstan, UNHCR is working with the Government and partner agencies to ensure the sustainable reintegration of those displaced by ethnic violence in 2010. Programmes in community development, coexistence, livelihoods and protection are being implemented under the umbrella of the Secretary-General's Durable Solutions Initiative for Displaced People, with support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. UNHCR's contribution to these collaborative efforts includes community reconciliation initiatives and legal assistance to facilitate access to services and justice.

VI. Protection, prevention and solutions in relation to statelessness

58. UNHCR has continued to expand its statelessness activities and forge new partnerships, encouraging an enlargement in the pool of actors working to address the issue. Heightened international awareness of the problem, as well as greater resolve by States and other stakeholders to prevent and eradicate situations of statelessness, have also led to significant results. These advancements stem largely from the international and organization-wide focus on statelessness since the 2011 ministerial intergovernmental event, which commemorated the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

59. Accessions to both the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention continued to grow. Côte d'Ivoire, Jamaica, Lithuania, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Peru and Ukraine acceded to one or both of the statelessness conventions. This brought the number of States parties to the 1954 Convention to 80 and to the 1961 Convention to 55. Thirty-two per cent of the pledges on accession made by States at the ministerial intergovernmental event have now been completed.

60. Determining the number, profile and situation of stateless people remains a challenge. Based on improved baseline statistical data, UNHCR revised its estimate of the number of stateless people globally to at least ten million. Mapping initiatives and studies to more accurately determine the number of stateless individuals and better understand the hardships they face were conducted in the Baltic and Nordic countries.

61. Determining the status of stateless persons is vital to ensuring that they receive the protection that flows from such recognition. UNHCR worked closely with the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to establish a statelessness determination procedure. Turkey adopted a law on foreigners and international protection, which establishes a framework for the protection and identification of stateless persons. UNHCR will continue to advocate for the adoption of statelessness determination procedures in countries challenged by the identification and treatment of stateless people in the migration context. This includes the nine remaining countries which pledged to adopt such procedures at the 2011 ministerial intergovernmental event. To encourage such efforts among these and other States, a new brochure on statelessness determination procedures was developed.

62. UNHCR provided advice on the reform of nationality laws to prevent and reduce statelessness in 67 countries. To further develop international legal guidance on the issue of loss and deprivation of nationality, which can lead to statelessness, UNHCR convened an expert meeting to discuss and reach conclusions on the interpretation of Articles 5-10 of the 1961 Convention.

63. Building on last year's Executive Committee Conclusion No. 111(LXIV) on civil registration (see A/AC.96/1132, para. 13), efforts to achieve universal birth registration as a means of preventing statelessness among children are being reinforced through a number of activities in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. In Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, birth registration of Syrian refugee children born in those countries was promoted though country-specific advocacy materials distributed to the refugees and the local authorities. In the Asia-Pacific region, UNHCR collaborated with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Plan International, to provide input on birth registration and the prevention of statelessness for the Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics.

64. One critical breakthrough in the effort to prevent statelessness has been in relation to the reform of nationality laws that discriminate against women, preventing mothers from conferring nationality on their children and leading to statelessness. In 2013, Senegal reformed its nationality law. The Bahamas Constitutional Commission agreed with UNHCR's recommendation to recast in gender neutral language certain articles of the Constitution relating to acquisition of nationality by children. Momentum on this issue has led to the formation of a new coalition of experts from civil society and academia, with the support of UNHCR and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). The coalition will work to raise awareness about nationality laws that discriminate against women and aim to achieve a significant reduction in the number of countries that retain gender-discriminatory nationality laws.

65. Another positive development was the reform by Côte d'Ivoire of its nationality law, which stands to benefit hundreds of thousands of stateless people. This measure will facilitate the acquisition of nationality by people who were born and resident in the country for decades and will also contribute to reconciliation and social cohesion. Technical advice and training in Côte d'Ivoire have already resulted in the confirmation of nationality for thousands of stateless people. Through the provision of legal support, UNHCR has been able to assist over 14,000 individuals to acquire or confirm their nationality in Kyrgyzstan. It has also assisted stateless people in Iraq to apply for nationality and those in South Sudan to confirm it.

66. UNHCR was concerned by a Constitutional Court ruling in the Dominican Republic that arbitrarily deprives tens of thousands of Dominicans, the majority of Haitian descent, of their nationality and renders them stateless. In response, UNHCR, together with the United Nations Country Team, offered to assist the Government in taking steps to restore the nationality of individuals affected by the ruling. Elsewhere around the world, UNHCR continued to advocate for the resolution of large protracted statelessness situations.

67. In 2013, UNHCR laid the groundwork for its campaign to eradicate statelessness over the next ten years, concentrating specifically on partnerships, awareness-raising and capacity building. Following up on the High Commissioner's 2012 Dialogue on Protection Challenges: Faith and Protection, UNHCR participated in a consultation on the human rights of stateless persons organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC). This led to the WCC Assembly establishing statelessness as a global priority issue for the next eight years. Building on its existing partnership with the IPU, UNHCR delivered a workshop benefiting over 60 parliamentarians on gender discrimination in nationality laws and statelessness. In West Africa, following a roundtable co-organized with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union in September 2013, the Banjul Appeal was issued. This regional declaration calls upon States, NGOs, and regional and international organizations to take specific measures to prevent and reduce statelessness. UNHCR worked with the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) to convene the first regional conference on statelessness in six GCC Member States. In 2014, UNHCR is using the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1954 Convention to help generate momentum for the campaign to eradicate statelessness.

VII. Conclusion

68. The multitude, scale and rapid escalation of the emergencies in recent years has made the delivery of protection and humanitarian assistance, as well as the identification of solutions, increasingly complex. The year was again dominated by protracted situations and new emergencies, causing large-scale displacement both internally and across borders. Insecure and inaccessible locations challenged the delivery of aid and the provision of protection, putting the lives and safety of United Nations personnel and partners at risk.

UNHCR is striving to respond robustly and innovatively to the diverse legal, operational, resource and security challenges brought on by a myriad of complex situations. UNHCR calls upon the international community to share burdens and responsibilities and to redouble its efforts to find solutions to the many displacement and statelessness situations around the globe.